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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 13 October 1992, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. GANEV (President)	(Bulgaria)
later:	Mr. MAYORGA CORTES (Vice-President)	(Nicaragua)

- Earthquake in Egypt

- Social development: (a) Questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family [93] (continued)

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Conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons:

(i) Report of the Secretary-General
(ii) Draft resolution

- Programme of work

- Social development: (a) Questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family [93] (continued)

Conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons:

(i) Report of the Secretary-General
(ii) Draft resolution

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

EARTHQUAKE IN EGYPT

The PRESIDENT: May I, on behalf of all the members of the Assembly, extend our deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of Egypt on the tragic loss of life and extensive material damage that have resulted from the earthquake that struck Egypt yesterday.

May I also express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

I now call on the representative of Egypt.

Mr. EL-ARABI (Egypt) (interpretation from Arabic): I should like to extend the thanks of my country's delegation to you, personally, Mr. President, for condoling with us and to all members of the General Assembly for their sentiments of sympathy with the people and Government of Egypt in relation to the appalling catastrophe that has befallen Cairo and other parts of the Delta as a result of yesterday's earthquake which registered 5.9 on the Richter scale. The exact number of casualties and the extent of material damage resulting from that earthquake are not known yet. However, preliminary estimates put the number of deaths in the hundreds in addition to the thousands of injured and missing due to the collapse of a number of houses in certain areas of high population density.

Never in its recorded history of more than seven thousand years has Egypt experienced such an earthquake, and, as far as I know, it has never been said that Egypt is susceptible to such devastating earth tremors. Egypt's soil abounds with monuments that show it was the cradle of civilization. Such priceless monuments could never have survived had Egypt been exposed to such earthquakes from time to time.

Mr. President, we deeply appreciate the sentiments you have expressed on behalf of the General Assembly. I shall transmit them to the Egyptian Government.

I also want to express our deep gratitude to those countries that have already given assistance to Egypt, as well as to those countries that will undoubtedly do so.

We are confident that with God's help and the assistance of the international community, we shall be able to alleviate the suffering of the victims.

AGENDA ITEM 93 (continued)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: (a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

CONCLUSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS

(i) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/415)
(ii) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/47/L.4)

The PRESIDENT: This morning the General Assembly, in accordance with the decision taken at its 3rd plenary meeting, is holding the third of the plenary meetings to mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 93.

Mr. GILLIBERT (France) (interpretation from French): It gives me great pleasure to be here in this Assembly today, first as a disabled person myself and also as a representative of the French Government, because this special place is the focal point and forum where people from all countries come together to build something new. We are gathered here to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons - of those whose lives have been impaired by disability. This is the first time the General Assembly has devoted plenary meetings to the theme of disability.

I am delighted to see that so many ministers have come here in person to attend these special meetings in response to the invitation urgently extended to them at the request of the United Nations.

These two days are of great significance since it is our common task to define a new strategy for the years ahead, for what is said to be long term but is in fact the immediate future, a strategy of concern to more than 500 million persons in the world.

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The proclamation in 1982 of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the adoption of a World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons were a starting-point for States Members of the Organization in their resolve to provide persons whose lives have been impaired by disability with the means of access to equal rights and opportunities in accordance with their fundamental human rights, to which our countries are so committed.

The Decade comes to an end today. Let us be quite candid: the sum total of all the good intentions, of all the recommendations adopted since 1982, falls far short of the anticipated results, and I know that many of those now present share my view. It would be hypocritical not to acknowledge this fact.

Let us not engage in any self-congratulation. These large gatherings are indispensable, but they should not be used merely to draw up a catalogue of our texts, each more eloquent than the other. We must also admit our failures and acknowledge the indifference that remains a fact of life - indifference to the injustice and the pain of disability. Let us not come with our statements already prepared. Let us throw out these papers a priori. Let us build the future. Let us have the courage to depart from this same old routine of producing texts. Those with disabilities cannot afford to wait any longer.

But let us also be candid about the difficulty of this undertaking: how can we find an approach that is coherent, effective and applicable to more than 180 countries with specific conditions that are as various as they are complex, and with contexts that differ widely one from the other?

Are we to conclude that there is no solution? Personally, I refuse to do so. The presence of such a large number of ministers here and at the International Conference in Montreal, organized by my friend Mr. Robert de Cotret, the Secretary of State of Canada, shows that this is a

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burning issue and that we are all concerned. The reason we are all gathered here today is that we want things to change.

Let us be careful, however. I have often heard it said that things should change, but they do not change very much. It is time that this remark cease to be used as an excuse. We should all take a real and positive decision.

As the Secretary-General said yesterday in his opening statement, the Decade has not been without results. It is important to know that all this work, all these meetings over the past 10 years, motivate and gently influence each one of us.

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The Decade has most certainly begun to raise the awareness of all influential people in our societies and has forced them to acknowledge the need to integrate disabled persons into society. Disability is a human and economic reality; from the human and economic point of view, a policy of integration is the only effective and acceptable course. Human and economic: the two words cannot be separated if we are to be realistic and effective.

At its two most recent sessions, the Commission for Social Development affirmed the manifest need for immediate efforts to be made beyond the Decade, with a view to attaining its objectives and promoting the integration of disabled persons into society, placing the emphasis on the developing countries, in particular the least developed countries.

To which, of course, I say: excellent idea! But let us first review certain facts, to ensure that the experience that some of us have gained serves to assist the quest and meet the expectations of others.

We wealthy countries must stop our lectures and critical analyses. The industrialised countries have a measure of good fortune which they must share with those who have less or nothing at all. For this good fortune does not belong to anyone. It is the result of pure chance. If the industrialized countries are to be able to help others effectively, they themselves must devise a policy for the integration of disabled persons into society.

With that objective in mind, and with the assistance of the Council of Europe, on 7 and 8 November 1991 we organized in Paris the first world Conference of Ministers dealing with disabled affairs on the theme of global policy. The fact that 34 Ministers from Europe and observer countries were present - and Canada was particularly active there - confirmed the heightened awareness to which I referred earlier. The Paris Conference provided the

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Governments represented there with an opportunity to affirm their determination to establish policies that would in future be based on the principle of independent living, thus turning the page on the charity-oriented policies of the past.

The Ministers further agreed that intergovernmental cooperation was indispensable in the future. That cooperation should be organized at the regional level, as is being done in Europe. It should naturally extend also to the international level, and the United Nations is the most appropriate forum for it. A few days ago the Montreal Conference reaffirmed this political resolve. Again, we thank Canada and its Secretary of State, Mr. Robert dé Cotret, for his initiative and his determination.

Disability should not be dealt with through charity or welfare services. It should be dealt with through an approach that integrates disabled persons into society and enables them to function as full citizens. Because disabled persons live like everyone else, 24 hours a day, but with certain differences, a global disability policy must be devised, and the needs of those whose lives have been impaired by disability must be incorporated in all projects from the very outset. This will benefit us all.

A global disability policy is a living chain, of which every response forms a link. We must not be content with seeing matters improve in one particular area if other problems in the chain, upstream or downstream, remain unresolved.

Piecemeal policies are expensive and are nothing more than Bengal lights, for the isolated improvements they produce often lose their effectiveness because no solutions are found to related problems. Thus, for example, the employment of disabled persons will remain an unattainable objective as long

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as such issues as training, transportation, accessibility, support services and the physical adaptation of the workplace remain unresolved.

That is the philosophy which has guided our efforts in France and in an increasing number of countries. In keeping with this philosophy, I do not believe it would be appropriate to establish specific rights for disabled persons. I would even go further and say that to seek specific rights for disabled persons runs counter to a genuine policy of integrating such persons into society. This would place them even further outside the mainstream, whereas we wish to do the opposite, and I know that the majority of States here share that point of view. Instead, States have a responsibility to provide disabled persons with the means to take their place as full citizens, in all fields - political, economic, social and cultural alike. We believe that this should be borne in mind during the follow-up to the activities of the working group established to draw up standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The international Conference of Ministers dealing with disabled affairs, held a few days ago in Montreal, resulted in a proposal for the establishment of mechanisms for the exchange of information and collaboration among Ministers. We can only welcome and commend initiatives such as that of Canada, which was marked by the desire to achieve a political consensus on a world plan of action as a follow-up to the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

The method proposed at the Montreal Conference for the convening of regular meetings of Ministers has already been successfully tried in Europe, by both the Economic Commission for Europe and the Council of Europe - I referred earlier to the Paris Conference. It is true that such meetings

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usually generate a certain dynamism and provide an impetus for the political will of States, clearly enunciated in various priorities or guiding principles. However, we must take care that we do not merely superimpose yet another structure.

Existing United Nations mechanisms for dealing with the subject of disability have been the subject of criticism. I myself have painted a somewhat severe picture of the Decade here, as I already had occasion to do in Finland and in October 1990 before the Third Committee. Nevertheless, I believe that the United Nations is and must remain a unique and privileged forum for the exchange of views and cooperation between countries. No other structure will ever have the same legitimacy or universality. I therefore come before the General Assembly today to emphasize that we must not abandon our efforts. Let us give new impetus to the work of the United Nations. Let us learn from the errors of the Decade so that we may improve the existing mechanisms.

The structure proposed by Canada should not take the place of the United Nations but should instead support and complement its work, within the framework of a vastly reorganized and improved system.

I am pleased that I am able to participate in these special meetings, at which we have the opportunity not only to voice our criticism, but also to build a future on the basis of proposals for possible improvements. I should therefore like to offer my contribution and present a few proposals, while bearing in mind the ultimate objective that guides us, namely, the full integration of disabled persons into society, taking into account the diversity of levels of development and of social and cultural realities in each of our countries. Our proposals are structured around a few very simple ideas.

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First, each Government should clearly designate a specific member of the Government to be responsible for policy relating to disabled persons. Thus, with the continuity of established policies, everyone - disabled persons and their associations as well as their foreign counterparts - would be assured of finding someone to talk to at the national level.

Secondly, in the United Nations it is also important that all its activities aimed at promoting a global disability policy be monitored at the highest level. Indeed, the relative ineffectiveness of the Decade is to a large extent attributable to the functioning difficulties of the Commission for Social Development. And what are we to say of the system for the collection of information from States, which is based on the sending out of questionnaires that often go unanswered? All that must be improved, and even more can be done.

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Thirdly, the Voluntary Fund for the Decade of Disabled Persons should be continued and its priorities updated. France has already taken a position along those lines. In order to ensure the continuation of projects which have already been undertaken, I would first call upon all Member States to continue and increase their assistance. The Fund might also begin to receive more diversified contributions, originating not only from States but also from private institutions, enterprises and individuals. As a condition of increased interest from contributors to the Fund, the administration of the Fund could be made more transparent.

Fourthly, in 1990, at the expert group meeting held in Finland and subsequently in the Third Committee during the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, I invited each country to make a start by singling out an annual priority from among the objectives of the Decade and to do everything possible to achieve that objective. Cooperation and exchanges might thus be established between countries which set themselves the same objectives. The Organization might also involve its various organs more effectively and to a greater extent in activities on behalf of disabled persons. The coordination of such activities between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other agencies could also be improved.

Fifthly, one means of increasing the effectiveness of the system would be to consider setting up competent regional structures, with a view to coming to grip with local problems. Could we not, for example, make use of the regional commissions, adapting their mandate to that end? This would enable these countries to benefit from the experience of others that had already achieved the objective they had set themselves.

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The proposals I have just put forward represent specific and realistic commitments. France will make proposals along these lines in the very near future. Personally speaking, I have confidence in the Organization. I know that it is capable of building a positive future for all persons with disabilities and of promoting progress by all countries towards a global policy on disability.

These proposals are a point of departure. They need to be refined and supplemented, and I have no doubt that others will have further proposals to make. We are at a major, strategic turning-point: we have the opportunity today to make a new start, benefiting from the lessons we have learned from the Decade.

Mrs. SIGURDARDÓTTIR (Iceland): Allow me to express my sincere satisfaction at seeing for the first time a debate in the General Assembly on the disability issue. I am convinced that this debate will be of crucial importance for the continuation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and long-term strategy in the field up to the year 2000 and beyond.

Allow me to compliment the Secretary-General on his comprehensive report entitled "Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons". The report gives an objective and highly informative account of the impact of the Decade, the major obstacles we had to contend with and our achievements.

It is apparent that what has been accomplished during the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons is in fact somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, it is clear that considerable progress has been made in a number of countries, notably those which are more affluent and have had the material resources to

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take decisive steps towards achieving the goals of the Programme of Action; on the other hand, it is disturbing to have to admit that the situation in many parts of the world has deteriorated as far as disabled people are concerned. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, there are indications that the number of disabled persons has increased as a consequence of poverty, malnutrition, disease and war. During this period the economic and social situation of many countries has grown worse, which has affected disabled people in particular. This underlines the fact that disability issues cannot be viewed in isolation from global political, economic and social issues. It is a reminder of the moral obligation of affluent societies to support the developing countries. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of the values upon which the very foundation of the United Nations rests: the promotion of world peace and the social and economic well-being of mankind.

There is common agreement, I believe, that the major achievement of the Decade has been the increased awareness and understanding of the nature of disabilities and the conditions of life that disabled persons experience. That, of course, is a prerequisite for any real progress in their situation. However, it is not sufficient, as that awareness must be put into action for the benefit of the disabled.

During the Decade, many countries have implemented various programmes that have had a significant impact. Some of these programmes have been the result of research that has produced knowledge. Other programmes, owing to the active involvement of disabled people in policy-making, have in turn revolutionized many of the previous ideas and policies concerning disability issues. In a number of countries these new ideas have found their way into national legislation that has transformed the nature of services provided for disabled persons. The emergence and strengthening of organizations of persons

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with disabilities and the efforts of other non-governmental organizations have contributed greatly to that development. It has been further enhanced and deepened by international cooperation and the sharing of information and experience. The role of international organizations in this respect has been extremely important.

On this occasion I am proud to be able to state that my country, Iceland, is probably among those countries that have derived the greatest benefit from the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. The International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 had a profound impact on disability issues in Iceland. It laid the foundation for our first comprehensive legislation on services for the disabled, which came into force two years later. The purpose of the Act was to ensure the equality and full participation of disabled people in society and to coordinate services for all disabled persons, irrespective of the nature of their disability. The legislation secured the participation of all organizations of disabled persons in the decision-making process and the coordination of services at the national and local level.

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During the Decade the development of services for disabled persons in Iceland has been immense in almost all fields. At the beginning of the period such services were limited to the larger cities and were virtually absent in the countryside, but they are now to be found in all areas of the country. There has been a shift in living arrangements away from large institutions to group homes or collectives integrated into the community. Provisions for rehabilitation, vocational training and employment for disabled persons have greatly improved. Educational opportunities, day care facilities and various therapeutic programmes are now provided Comprehensive services are now available for the families of disabled children. During the Decade public expenditure on social services allocated to disabled people has nearly tripled, from $59 per capita in 1982 to $165 per capita in 1992.

Over the past two years a re-evaluation of the disabled persons issue has taken place in Iceland. The major conclusions are that the achievements during the period have been beyond doubt in quantitative terms. However, they do not meet the qualitative aspirations of the future. Consequently, the Althing, our Parliament, passed new legislation on disability earlier this year. The ideology of the new Act is in accordance with the emphasis of the other Nordic countries on decentralization of services and independent living for disabled persons.

I stated earlier that the disability issue could not be debated in isolation from other social and political issues. It is my conviction that the emergence of the environmental-related concept of disability has been of great significance for policy-making. It involves the understanding that disability can be comprehended only by examining the relationship between the

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impairment and the person's social surroundings. Therefore, disability is not necessarily an inherent property of the individual and it can be subject to change. This approach stresses the importance of the disabled person's local community and the personal support he needs in order to exercise his human rights. It also draws attention to the different needs of persons with different disabilities. Unfortunately, increased awareness and understanding has not extended to all kinds of disabilities. Autistic and mentally ill people, for example, seem to be more prone to social prejudice than are other disabled persons.

In the light of the environmental approach, the reasons for the disappointing results of the World Programme of Action in a large part of the world become apparent. As stated in the Secretary-General's report, the living conditions in many countries are so desperate that the provision of basic needs for all, including health protection and education, must form the cornerstone of national programmes. This implies that it can be questioned whether the presentation of the World Programme of Action solely confined to disabled persons is applicable in those parts of the world.

General programmes seem to be more appropriate, programmes directed at the general welfare of the public, but with emphasis on services that can benefit disabled persons as well as other groups in society. This approach can contribute to the construction of integrated services for the disabled and others who are in need of those services for different reasons. The long-term gain could be to prevent the emergence of many of those barriers that a number of the more affluent countries are now striving to break down and thus to prevent the segregation of disabled persons from the rest of society.

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These contemplations lead me to suggest that perhaps it would be worth the effort to examine the implementation of the World Programme of Action in relation to the proclamation by the General Assembly of 1994 as the International Year of the Family. It may well be that the United Nations will decide on the Decade of the Family in the wake of the Year, in which case such an examination would be crucial.

I should also like my contemplations to take another direction. Programmes for disabled persons are important, but they will not be realized without adequate financing. It is clear that active measures in developing countries are often dependent on material support given by the more affluent countries. Therefore, increased aid must be provided. One way in which this support can be achieved is to devote a fixed ratio of total governmental expenditure on disability issues for a certain number of years to programmes for disabled persons in developing countries. I have introduced this idea to the leaders of all the organizations for disabled people in my country. Their response has been to welcome it and to declare their sincere will to implement it.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay my respects to the World Committee for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and to convey my gratitude for its efforts. The Committee is urging the United Nations to carry out its commitment to turn awareness into action in the decade ahead; to convene a United Nations conference on disability by 1995; and to establish a United Nations disability agency. It also says that the Secretary-General should assert his moral leadership to inspire heads of State and other world leaders to act. I declare that I firmly support these recommendations.

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To conclude, I should like to inform the General Assembly that the Icelandic Government has agreed to endorse an international conference on disability issues in Iceland in 1993. Entitled "The International Professional Summit on Beyond Normalization: An International Exchange on Life-Enhancing Opportunities for Persons who are Developmentally Disabled", the summit is being initiated and organized by the American organization United World Partnership on Developmental Disabilities together with all the organizations of disabled persons in Iceland. The President of Iceland has agreed to be the patron of this summit. I welcome everyone here to attend and hope this event will be a contribution towards the aim of creating a "Society for All" by the year 2010.

Ms. KNUDSEN (Norway): We congratulate the United Nations on the historic event which marks the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. The mere arrangements for these special meetings of the General Assembly tells us of the increased awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities to participate and speak for themselves on equal terms.

We have noted with particular satisfaction that several Member States have designated persons with disabilities as members of the official national delegations to these special meetings. The accessibility and facilities demonstrated here prove that persons with disabilities, when given equal opportunities, can also participate fully in political life.

We must view this as the start of our continued efforts to improve the everyday situation of some 10 per cent of the world's population. On behalf of the Norwegian Government I would like to express some views on what we have done in Norway to put into effect the aims of the Decade, what we believe ought to be the basic principles which should guide our future action and what ought to be the priorities in this field for the United Nations system in the years to come.

I would like to start by stressing the continued relevance of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The programme has been widely discussed and has produced new ideas and proposals for action on the national, regional and global levels.

The Decade, as we now look back on it, was very useful in relation to increasing awareness. The concrete results of the Decade for the individuals concerned may not have been what we all hoped for at the outset, but we should acknowledge that some important results will have been achieved in the various countries during this period. The Secretary-General's report bears witness to

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this. Our task now is to ensure that the momentum achieved is not lost but utilized to improve further the situation of persons with disabilities and to ensure their full participation in the development of their own societies.

Let me then make some comments as regards Norway.

The motto for the International Year in 1981 was "Full participation and equality". At the end of the Year, we decided to prepare a national plan of action for the 1980s. I personally had the honour of being a member of the working group. In 1982, our official declaration of policy and our own plan of action was adopted. The valuable contributions from the organizations of persons with disabilities were vital in forming the basis of the Government's plan of action for persons with disabilities covering the period 1990-1993. That document, on which all political parties in Norway agree, contains the general objectives of our policy for persons with disabilities. It contains some 50 specific measures which are to be carried out in whole or in part during the period. So far, this has been a success which we have decided to repeat for the period 1994-1998.

As part of the process of developing an adequate policy, we strengthened the Norwegian State Council for the Disabled, which is appointed by the Government. The Council consists of representatives of the organizations of persons with disabilities and government agencies. It gives advice to the Government on issues of disability policy. The Council has proved to be a useful instrument in securing participation in policy development by those most concerned. The Council is responsible for the monitoring of the national action plan on disability. It will also be the body responsible for the monitoring of the standard rules which have recently been proposed and which I shall discuss further.

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Norway is striving systematically to achieve a society for all. This is particularly important for all those whose disabilities bring them up against barriers, but it will be important to all of us as we grow older. A society adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities will benefit us all.

Other tasks that will have to be given special emphasis, if society is not to exclude persons with disabilities, are to ensure treatment of illness and injury, and to prevent injuries and illnesses which cause disabilities.

In our four-year plan of action we particularly focus on the participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations in planning and decision-making in the areas of society where persons with disabilities are significant consumers of services. Only when as much importance is attached to their interests in the decision-making process as to the interests of others can we expect policies which take the rights and needs of persons with disabilities fully into account.

It is an important objective to give persons with disabilities real opportunities to participate in the formation of society. In this respect, the organizations of persons with disabilities themselves cooperate and have important contributions to make. This was recently demonstrated in my country when we started the implementation of our new policy to close all big centralized institutions and fully integrate persons with mental retardation in their own communities. We believe this reform is a significant step forward in the promotion of human rights in the field. But we still have a long way to go in developing our own attitudes towards disabled persons.

To ensure participation of persons with disabilities in community planning, we encourage all communities and cities to establish local councils on disability and develop local plans for the integration of persons with disabilities.

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I should like now to say a few words on the future priorities of the United Nations.

As correctly pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General, the basis of our future work is threefold: the programme of action itself, the long-term strategy as developed by the Vancouver meeting, and the standard rules with its system of monitoring which will become quite crucial in measuring our progress in the years to come.

The ad hoc working group for the elaboration of standard rules for the disabled, under the United Nations Commission for Social Development, has been essential in establishing a concrete basis for the improvement of living conditions for persons with disabilities on the global level.

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We agree with the working group that the principle of accessibility is of vital importance. Participation in and strengthening of the organizations of persons with disabilities themselves is equally important. We are very happy that these important principles have been universally agreed upon.

In its final meeting a few days ago, the working group finalized its proposals on a monitoring mechanism related to the standard rules. We are not entirely satisfied with the final proposal and fear that it is too limited in its scope. We must make sure that a monitoring mechanism is effectively introduced and followed up.

It will be important to encourage all Governments to establish national committees for the monitoring of the situation of persons with disabilities in their own countries and that organizations of disabled be represented on such bodies. These committees are of vital importance to bring into focus the fact that it is a national responsibility to see to it that certain groups do not lag behind in the development of the country. Furthermore, they should assist in the development and strengthening of the capabilities of national organizations of persons with disabilities by assisting in management training programmes and support projects run by the organizations. On the international level, the International Disability Centre could become a constructive contribution in this context.

It is also necessary to address in a more resolute way than hitherto the use of development assistance funds in such a way as to enhance the improvement of conditions of life and work for sections of the population that face difficult situations in their everyday life. This applies equally to recipient and donor countries and to international organizations, including

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the entire United Nations system. Development assistance programmes should include consideration of the various needs of the community, including those of persons with disabilities.

National organizations of disabled persons of both donor and recipient Governments should be consulted in the planning process of providing development assistance for projects which could impact on the needs of the recipient Government's disabled community. Recipient Governments should ensure that the appropriate organizations of persons with disabilities are involved in the implementation of projects concerning their own situation.

Governments must give more encouragement and become more involved in order to ensure the development and expansion in developing countries of locally produced equipment and technical devices for persons with disabilities.

I should also like to stress the importance of access to full participation in sport activities, as well as other cultural manifestations. The Norwegian Government is inviting interested countries to participate in a seminar in Norway next March on the theme "Focus on the potential", dealing with the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities through physical activity, including outdoor pursuits in the natural environment.

Let me end by offering some comments on the role of the United Nations, and indeed the whole international community. We need to mobilize all good forces in order to ensure that the disability issue is placed firmly on the international agenda. This applies both to the entire United Nations system and to the individual Governments. The action initiated by the Montreal Conference recently will no doubt help us along and the proposed World Social Summit might offer the possibility of achieving further progress.

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It is of vital importance that the United Nations give high priority to the work for better living conditions for persons with disabilities in the years to come as well. We have now developed the tools to do so. Now is the time for more extensive use of them. The United Nations must have the role of monitoring this work.

With 10 years' experience behind us now, persons with disabilities may rightly demand from us that we establish systems which may be helpful in our common work to develop a more accepting, and therefore a warmer, society for all of us.

Mrs. SHAHANI (Philippines): Mr. President, thank you for the opportunity to address this special meeting of the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session marking the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. It gives me great pleasure to report to the Assembly the Philippines response to the challenges contained in the World Programme of Action for Disabled Persons, adopted on 3 December 1982 by the General Assembly.

It has been a full decade since the World Programme of Action asserted that the concept of human rights must recognize the inherent right of equality for all - every man or woman, young or old, and people with various physical and mental abilities to have equal access, opportunities, protection and care.

If I may be allowed to say so, I had the great honour to be the Special Representative of the Secretary-General during the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, and Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs from 1981 to 1986. It was also my privilege at that time to collaborate with outstanding disabled persons and experts on disability, some of whom are here with us today, in preparing the

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draft for the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons which, I now understand, is considered the bible for disability. This was a most inspiring experience. Truly, the World Programme of Action is a worthy contribution of which the United Nations and its Member States can be proud.

The years 1982 to 1992 provided the time-frame by which Governments and organizations all over the world could prove the validity, vision and plans of the World Programme of Action. Each country, agency, group and movement was enjoined to exercise its political will and meet head-on many unjust structures and barriers against disability. It was indeed a meaningful call and challenge for meaningful change.

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

Today, as the Decade draws to a close, we come together again as a community to ask a simple question: what has the Decade accomplished? My delegation is acutely aware of the fact that the Decade has fallen short of expectations, but it remains a milestone in global cooperation on disability. In this regard the recent Montreal meeting of Ministers responsible for the status of disabled persons augurs well for ensuring the political will of countries to realize the vision of a better life, of dignified and independent living for the disabled.

In evaluating our work on disability rights after a full decade of history and social change, we take stock of the progress we have made collectively and individually and of the variety of specific experiences that we as Members of the Organization have chalked up. Our meeting today signifies that we should assess our past actions and recognize our gains, and it helps us to continue the long-term commitment to disability rights, beyond the Decade's Programme of Action, on to the future, the twenty-first century.

My report on the Philippines and our national programme of action on disability is one marked equally by new hopes, responsive legislative action and positive policy-making, as evidenced by efforts in forging broad-based partnerships with grass-roots sectors. We faced the enormous challenges and accomplished some substantial gains despite the extreme natural and social upheavals that engulfed our country - something that perhaps no other nation had to endure to such an extent as did the Philippines - during the preceding decade. At the close of the Decade, the Philippines has an estimated 6.4 million people among the differently-abled populations, located largely in rural areas, but some in urban centers.

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

By definition, disablement usually arises from inborn or acquired circumstance of sensory, physical or mental impairment. Visual disability - blindness - ranks highest, there being almost a million blind persons. Of these, 70 per cent are more than 50 years old, and their blindness is due to cataract, and 60 per cent are classified as medically indigent. Vitamin-A deficiency - recognized as a public-health problem - is a major cause of blindness among our children. Hearing impairment affects another 800,000 Filipinos. Physical disabilities, according to orthopaedic statistics, affect more than a million people. Polio and other lower- limb injury, tuberculosis, crossfire military encounters and traffic-accident injuries are main causes of physical impairment. It is estimated that mental handicap arising from genetic and congenital conditions, birth trauma and, in many areas, iodine deficiency is a major cause of disability. Iodine deficiency affects some 18 million people in rural areas, contributing to mental retardation, stunted growth and birth risks. Of the people with iodine deficiency, 65 per cent live in mountainous areas, and 60 per cent of them are women.

A recent survey found a nationwide disability prevalence of 4.6 per cent, with a prevalence of 5 per cent among children from one year to three years of age. The ranks of the disabled generally have increased in the last decade owing to endemic poverty factors, the effects of the insurgency war, and, of late, terrible natural disasters. The recent wave of calamities, such as the Mount Pinatubo eruptions and mudflows called "lahar", as well as earthquakes and tidal waves, has unleashed untold suffering for peasants and tribal people, fisher folk and poor communities in many parts of the Philippines.

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

The alleviation of social inequities, and the resulting havoc for the physical and mental health of the people, has always been on the agenda of the Philippine Government and, thus, has become its barometer of social change. Recent important historical events, such as the 1986 people-power revolution, the adoption of the 1987 Constitution, and the 1992 presidential elections, amount to concrete affirmations of hope for the disabled. Beyond mere declarations of faith in the dignity of the human person, recognition of their equal rights and pledges to promote better conditions of life, Government action was matched with broad-based partnership and international linkage in this decade-long campaign for human rights for the disabled.

The Philippines has made a remarkable, often called unique, structural response to the challenge of the Decade of Disabled Persons. Let me give some examples. First, perhaps the Philippines is the only country to have enacted, as part of its Constitution, a provision for the protection of the disabled and the appointment of a member of Parliament to represent the interests of people with disabilities and their organizations. Secondly, the Philippines Congress enacted a Magna Carta on Disabled Persons, which prescribed substantial penalties for discrimination against people with disabilities. Thirdly, a National Council on Disability oversees action on disability rights as a joint enterprise between the Government and disability organizations. Fourthly, the Philippines, in 1983 - immediately after the United Nations declared the Decade - enacted a public-access law requiring mandatory access by the disabled to buildings and providing tax incentives to employers and factory owners who hire disabled persons.

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

In the field of legislation, the centrepiece of Philippine efforts to protect and promote the interests of those with disabilities was Republic Act 7277, which was enacted in March 1992. This law - referred to as the Magna Carta on Disability Rights - provides for the rehabilitation, self-development and self-reliance of people with disabilities to enable them to integrate into the mainstream of Philippine society.

A hallmark provision of the 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes the plight and rights of disabled persons. It says:

"The State shall establish a special agency for disabled persons for their integration into the mainstream of society."

The National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons was thus created as an all-encompassing consultative forum and clearing-house for action on disability rights.

In 1983 the Philippine Congress enacted Republic Act 344 - a public-access law requiring the provision of special parking spaces, handicap ramps on doorways and stairs, handlebars in public restrooms, and other devices to assist persons with disabilities.

Last year the Philippines ratified International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 159 concerning vocational rehabilitation and employment for disabled persons. Under this Convention the Philippines binds itself to an ILO Agreement that disabled Filipinos will be given vocational and social rehabilitation. With the ratification of the Convention by the Philippine Congress, the Philippines can lay claim to the distinction of being the second Asian country - next to China - to express a commitment to help the disabled lead meaningful and productive lives.

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

We recognize that legislation for the disabled, if unimplemented, remains merely a piece of paper. In many areas, countries like the Philippines lack the resources to implement such legialation fully, but the present Government of the Philippines is committed to empowering the disabled to help themselves and preparing them for the exercise of opportunities equal to those of their able-bodied compatriots.

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

I now come to the private sector, which has assumed a valuable role as a partner in the Philippines national progrmme of action for disabled persons. The range of non-governmental, community-based groups in effective enterprises with national, regional and local organs of Government has been unprecedented and indeed remarkable. Overall, in the spirit and practice of mutual self-help, some 600 voluntary organizations have become involved in one way or another with disability issues, with some 100 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) directly involved in rehabilitation projects and programmes.

In so far as job training is concerned, a community-based approach in health care for preventive and rehabilitative services has been implemented in about 91 per cent of some 37,000 Philippine villages, or barangays. The Government was also able to develop almost 1 million primary health care programmes and activities and to train more than 1 million health workers during the period 1982 to 1986. A broad range of information and an education campaign have resulted in better appreciation of disability issues.

Some 27 job-training workshops, established in various regions of the country, form a part of the programme for the training and employment of disabled persons, managed and supervised by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, as well as by civic, private or religious organizations. A major agency, the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, with three major branches, has been established for the purpose of providing training for those with disabilities. Leadership training programmes have been conducted under the United Nations programme of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. Opportunities for human resource development are continually offered, with meetings and workshops on psycho-social rehabilitation, hearing impairment, the production and use of appropriate technical aids and other self-enhancement programmes.

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

The cooperation of governmental and non-governmental organizations has also been very fruitful in the legislative field. Disabled persons' groups have an official representative in the Philippines Congress, or Parliament, and they conduct regular "think-in" sessions with leaders of disabled persons' organizations so as to provide input into legislative measures that affect them. By encouraging organizations and grass-roots movements on disability, the Government has been able to empower effective sectors to discuss, plan and act in concert with Government on disability issues, making this Decade truly a meaningful and fruitful one for the Philippines and its people with disabilities.

The Philippine Agenda on Disability has been set, and the National Programme of Action has ushered in a new era in disability concerns, which has gained a fair degree of prominence and success in achieving some of the goals of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

As to international linkages, the Philippines has established strong links with international agencies, such as the United Nations, its specialized agencies and so forth. In the Third Committee of the General Assembly the Philippines has for a number of years taken the lead in sponsoring the draft resolution on disabled persons. At the 1992 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council the Philippines again provided the initiative in the adoption of a decision that extended the United Nations Voluntary Fund on disability beyond the imperatives of the Decade.

The delegation of the Philippines to the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly is conducting extensive consultations, not only with other delegations, but also with international organizations of disabled persons represented here today, regarding a new draft resolution to be submitted to

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

the Third Committee. We hope that this draft resolution will have unanimous support.

In presenting the draft resolution, the delegation of the Philippines proposes that it should truly be reflective of the aspirations and priorities of disabled people, with specific and well-defined goals and with universal applicability, and that prevention and rehabilitation of disability must continue to be promoted as a principal aim of the United Nations World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

The national seminar of the International Initiative Against Avoidable Disablement (IMPACT), promoted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), held in Manila in August 1992, recommended that a practical priority for the next 10 years should be to reduce by one-third some of the major causes of disability I mentioned earlier.

The report of the Secretary-General recognizes the close links between disability and social realities. Even in developing countries, where the satisfaction of basic needs takes priority, sensitive Governments, like that of the Philippines, should take more serious account of the interests or special needs of their population when planning their national programmes for the coming century.

National programmes, in our view, should address the following key questions: first, the need for precise data on disability populations in any given country as a basis for policy-making and programme interventions; secondly, the scarcity of medical and health practitioners in the countryside to serve the majority of the disabled populations; and, thirdly, the need for improved coordination and maximized use of resources of governmental and non-governmental sectors in any given country.

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

In our view, national programmes should also place particular emphasis on groups with special vulnerability. Disabled women may be subject to double jeopardy or double discrimination because of their gender and their disability. There is a particularly pressing need to prevent very young children in poor countries from acquiring mental and physical disabilities as a result of poor and inadequate nutrition. The disabled in areas of military conflict or unrest, or in areas damaged by natural disasters, need immediate assistance. The list could go on.

A meaningful national programme encompasses the three components of action as underlined in the World Programme of Action: prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities. It should be comprehensive and coherent, and should aim at improving the quality of life of people with disabilities.

At the regional level, inspired by the Declaration by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) of a Second Decade for Disabled Persons, the delegation of the Philippines will study the possiblity of making the concerns of the disabled of the region of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) an area of cooperation between members of ASEAN - that is, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines.

It is also the profound hope of my delegation that the concerns of the disabled in the coming years will find priority at many of the international conferences to be held soon, such as the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 Conference on world population, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and the 1995 World Conference on Women, as well as during the 1994 International Year of the Family.

(Mrs. Shahani, Philippines)

It is also our profound hope that in the current debate on the restructuring of the United Nations, given the desire of the Member States and of the Secretary-General to strengthen the Economic and Social Council and the work of the United Nations in the economic and social areas, as well as in the area of sustainable development, the concerns and hopes of the disabled will be given attention and priority.

It takes a Government with a sustained political will, like our new Government under President Fidel V. Ramos, to address issues such as those on disability. It reflects the strength and commitment of a national government to serve all its people in a just and equal way, even during difficult times.

In conclusion, there should be no room for peace in our minds if we do not feel we have done our very best to help the disabled in their right to grow, their right to advance, and their right to live in dignity, equality and full participation.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: Regarding our tentative programme of plenary meetings, I should like to inform members that on Monday, 2 November, and on Tuesday, 3 November, the Assembly will hold the debate on agenda item 79, "Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development".

The list of speakers on this item is thus now open.

AGENDA ITEM 93 (continued)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: (a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

CONCLUSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS

(i) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/415)
(ii) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/47/L.4)

Mrs. GONDWE (Malawi): Mr. President, it gives me pleasure to congratulate you on behalf of the Malawi delegation on your election to your high office. I assure you of our support as you guide the deliberations of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly on the issues of the disabled.

The Malawi Government attaches considerable importance to issues concerning the welfare of the disabled. This is demonstrated by the fact that my Life President, Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda, is the Minister responsible for the affairs of the disabled. We therefore welcome and value the discussion of the issues of the disabled at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

As we mark the end of the United Nations Decade for the Disabled, it is our view that the past 10 years have made significant differences to the lives of the disabled in Malawi. We believe that this success is partly due firstly to the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 and the observance of the Decade itself.

In 1986 the Malawi Government decided to observe the United Nations Decade for the Disabled, and we formed a national Committee to oversee the implementation of the activities of this Decade. That Committee drew up a National Plan of Action which looked at strategies of affirmative action concerning the medical, social, vocational and employment/training needs of people with disabilities. The main objective of that plan was to ensure

(Mrs. Gondwe, Malawi)

the equalization of opportunities and full participation of disabled persons. Before those events, we already had a programme for assisting the disabled; the difference that the International Year of Disabled Persons and the Decade made was that they added new life and momentum to this ongoing programme for the disabled in Malawi.

As a result of that Plan of Action, Malawi has now been able to reach 9,361 disabled persons in two years, out of a total disabled population of 190,000, compared with 400 persons per year that were being assisted in the late 1970s. It is expected that this progress will continue with the expansion of the Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme. That Programme has a lot of promise. It is now the Government's major strategy for reaching the majority of the disabled, who are in rural areas. Assistance rendered to the disabled included placing 1,624 disabled children in schools in six districts of the country, providing medical and paramedical care to 3,178 persons and providing vocational skills to 1,520 persons.

The Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme has made a deliberate effort to identify and include as many women with disabilities as possible. Thus out of the 9,361 disabled persons identified in the six pilot districts, 3,115 were women. This is in marked contrast to previous experiences, where women constituted less than 4 per cent of the disabled persons assisted.

In another action to implement the United Nations Decade for the Disabled, the Malawi Government assisted directly in the formation of a National Disabled Persons' Association in Malawi in 1990. The aims and objectives of the Association are primarily intended to enable the disabled themselves to promote the welfare of persons with disabilities. The Association is now fully organized nationwide, and is recognized by the

(Mrs. Gondwe, Malawi)

Government and other organizations as the representative of persons with disabilities in Malawi. It has mobilized the disabled throughout the country and represents their needs and concerns on matters that affect the welfare of disabled persons. We consider this achievement to be a major outcome of the activities that the country has carried out during the United Nations Decade for the Disabled.*

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* Mr. Mayorga Cortes (Nicaragua), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mrs. Gondwe, Malawi)

My Government is actively involved as a matter of policy in promoting the integration of the disabled into the mainstream of development activities, through the enhancement of the rights of the disabled. The disabled face prejudice and bias, and it is necessary to ensure through legal and other means that their rights are not abused.

I cite these examples to show that we in Malawi have indeed benefited greatly from the United Nations Decade of the Disabled. However, we would be making a mistake if we were to content and satisfy ourselves with the achievements I have just outlined, and stopped there.

More still needs to be done. I have just stated that there are an estimated 190,000 disabled persons in Malawi. The programme and activities currently being carried out reach barely 10 per cent of this group. We are seriously constrained in a number of areas, including finance, manpower and technical skills. This is where we can use international assistance. We therefore strongly support the view that the United Nations should continue its programme on disability. In Malawi the Government intends to expand the community-based rehabilitation programme from its current six districts to all 24 districts in the country.

We need to continue the activities of the United Nations Decade of the Disabled. We therefore urge that these ongoing noble activities be strengthened and international cooperation in the field of disability be increased. My Government has benefited a great deal from this international cooperation, not only from United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme and the International Labour Organisation but also from a number of non-governmental bodies such as the Christofell Blinden Mission of Germany, Beit Trust and the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, to

(Mrs. Gondwe, Malawi)

mention only a few. We have also benefited from the cooperation of donors and Governments at the bilateral level. The Malawi Government believes that such cooperation is vital and should continue, especially with more assistance in the financial and technical areas.

I should like to draw attention to the need to emphasize the prevention of disabilities. We know that some disabilities can be prevented by simple means, such as improving the living conditions of rural people, preventing accidents and so on. We have good examples of this in the international actions that led to the eradication of such disabling diseases as smallpox, leprosy and polio. We urge that international efforts in this respect be continued, because they will benefit many of our people in the long term. My Government will cooperate in such work because we believe that the future of our people depends on such cooperation.

Finally, in answer to the question: where do we go from here, my delegation would like to support the initiatives taken at the Montreal meeting of Ministers responsible for the status of disabled persons, which we were privileged to attend. The proposed ministerial committee will ensure that the activities of the Decade continue and receive attention at the highest political level. We also would like to support the view that these activities should be coordinated with the United Nations system programme.

Mr. SUPENO (Indonesia): I should like to begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his informative and comprehensive statement on the issue of the disabled, and for the report he has provided (A/47/415). Let me also say that we are encouraged by the convening of these plenary meetings to mark the occasion of the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons - 1983-1992. It is most essential

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

to draw greater attention to the hopes and needs of the disabled so that we may continue to work together in meeting their aspirations.

It is not only for the disabled themselves, however, that we must strive to achieve their full participation in social, economic and political activities. It is in the interest of society as a whole that we protect the interests of vulnerable groups, and it is for the common good that we respect the dignity of, and the contribution that can be made by, all people. In this regard, the Tenth Summit Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries affirmed

"the fundamental human right to development, social progress, and the full participation of all in serving the common destiny of humankind."

To participate, or to be given the opportunity to pursue one's aspirations, is a right that must be enjoyed if our development activities are to have true meaning.

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

With the conclusion of the Decade, we must aggressively pursue the objectives of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. This occasion gives us the opportunity to reflect on what we have accomplished during the Decade in achieving those objectives, where we have fallen short and what remains to be done. The report of the Secretary-General offers us a good reference point. I agree that the Decade has laid the foundations for further development of policies, programmes and services, and, although there is little evidence to suggest that the conditions of disabled persons have improved during the last 10 years, I believe that we have made progress as a result of the Decade.

Although obstacles and impediments continue to prevent the full participation of disabled persons in social and economic activities throughout the world, during the past 10 years we have gained a greater awareness of inequities and become more sensitive to the needs of our fellow citizens. The Decade will, however, be a failure if we are unable or unwilling to translate this awareness into constructive action and find ways and means to realize full participation and all that it implies. In his report the Secretary-General has offered several worthwhile recommendations for our consideration. We must move forward and begin to implement substantive programmes that will directly benefit the disabled, especially those in the developing countries.

In that regard, our efforts to improve the socio-economic welfare of disabled persons must not be isolated from our overall national development activities. For the developing countries, this will not be an easy task. It is there, in the developing countries, that most of the world's disabled persons are to be found. Many of those countries already bear tremendous burdens and are struggling to provide for the most basic needs of their

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

populations, which are often living in acute poverty. And while all human resources should be mobilized for national development, preoccupation with the immense problems facing the developing countries will make the integration of the disabled in those countries more difficult.

In developing countries like Indonesia obstacles to improving the conditions of the disabled include not only the great number of persons with disabilities, but also transportation and communications constraints, unfavourable socio-economic conditions and competing needs. However, the progress that has been made in spite of those conditions gives ample reason for optimism. And, surely, if the overall socio-economic situation in the developing countries improves, through such means as alleviation of their external debt and the transfer of technology, we should expect the situation of their disabled to improve as well.

In recent years, for example, the achievement of universal child immunization has represented significant progress in the area of prevention. Likewise, as the developing countries realize further improvements in such areas as clean water, housing, hygiene and sanitation and better access to primary health care, particularly for the mother and child, I believe we will notice significant benefits deriving from preventive measures. In terms of being both cost-effective and moral, prevention ranks highly and needs to be emphasized. It is also one of the primary objectives of the World Programme of Action.

In this connection, at the Tenth Summit Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement it was agreed that a meeting of Ministers of Health would be convened to formulate programmes of cooperation in order to promote primary health care, accessible to all. If we can implement the goals for the socio-economic

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

development of the developing countries that were expressed at that Summit, then we will have greatly advanced the goals of the Decade as well.

Within Indonesia, universal child immunization has been achieved, and the Government has made a considerable effort to bring primary health care to the most remote regions of the country. In fact, our system of delivery, known as POSYANDU, or integrated health services, received the Maurice Pate Award from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Sasakawa Health Prize from the World Health Organization (WHO). Through gradual planning and proper programming, we have taken efficient and effective measures to improve the social welfare of disabled persons and have achieved notable success.

Furthermore, during the period of our fourth and fifth National Development Plans, from 1984 to 1994, much effort has been made to incorporate aspects of the World Programme of Action into our overall national development programmes. The result has been improvement in infrastructure and accessibility to rehabilitation and the development and upgrading of rehabilitation facilities. Personnel and operational units, including mobile rehabilitation units located in the provinces, have been made available. Yet, while we are now able to provide services to more people, many difficulties are still to be faced and a great deal more needs to be done.

At present services available to the disabled are provided from both institutional and non-institutional sources. However, the services available from institutional sources still reach only about 20 per cent of those targeted, while the non-institutional services seem to be more adequate. Additionally, during the past decade the participation of non-governmental organizations has yielded encouraging results.

In the area of legislative action, there are currently a number of regulations pending that would provide greater impetus for improving the

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

social welfare of the disabled in Indonesia. Those regulations concern such areas as employment and job placement, accessibility, social security and the coordination of activities in services for the disabled.

Let me conclude by reiterating Indonesia's determination to continue to address more effectively the issues of concern to its disabled community. While it is from improving overall socio-economic conditions for all people that we may expect the greatest contributions and benefits, we must nevertheless continue to implement those programmes within our current capacity. This is just and fair; above all, it is an obligation of the State to protect, and to contribute to the welfare of, its people, especially those termed vulnerable groups. When the international community convenes at the world summit for social development, which will consider the multidimensional aspects of social development and social welfare, we will have yet another occasion to reflect on the course we are taking in implementing the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. With our combined talent and determination, let that direction be positive and constructive.

Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados): The delegation of Barbados is pleased to participate in these special meetings to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. The Government of Barbados is honoured to welcome to its delegation on this occasion Mr. Carson Small, the representative of the Barbados National Organization of the Disabled (BARNOD). Mr. Small, although visually impaired, has served Barbados with distinction for many years in the communications field. His outstanding contribution attests to the fact that persons with disabilities can be fully integrated into society if given the opportunity.

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

Barbados attaches great importance to the objectives of the Decade, which provide for the development of policies, programmes and services aimed at creating equal opportunities for full participation in all sectors of the society by persons with disabilities. Barbados acknowledges the outstanding contributions which disabled persons have been making to the arts, entertainment, sports and many other areas of human endeavour. They are indeed a source of great inspiration to us all.

The slow progress in the implementation of the goals of the Decade and the Tallinn Guidelines has been determined by several factors. Recent data in the field of social development indicate that the number of disabled persons has increased over the course of the Decade. Between 6 per cent and 10 per cent of the world population - some 500 million people - have been identified as having one or more disabilities. It is estimated that 300 million of them live in developing countries and that only 1 per cent of them have access to basic health and education services and adequate sanitation services.

These factors, together with the harsh economic conditions experienced by many developing countries during the 1980s, will worsen the plight of disabled persons in developing countries unless a long-term programme of international economic cooperation is implemented to improve their status.

Human resource development has always been given priority in the national budgets of successive Governments of Barbados. The Government's commitment to people-centred development is reaffirmed in its Development Plan for the period 1988-1993 with its pledge that

"the maximum functional capacity of the individual is the desired goal to which all individuals are entitled."

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

Having supported the resolutions on the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, Barbados has striven to ensure that the objectives of promoting effective measures for the prevention of disability, for rehabilitation and for integration of the disabled in society are realized during the Decade. In this context, the Government has been collaborating with non-governmental organizations involved to evaluate progress and to redefine strategies and objectives in order to be able to respond appropriately to the needs of the disabled.

Seminars targeting parents, teachers, professionals in the field and the general public have been organized by Government agencies and organizations, such as the Council for the Handicapped, the Barbados National Organization for the Disabled and Parents for the Handicapped. The focus of these seminars has been on both children and adults. In this regard, the Government of Barbados is grateful for the assistance rendered by Partners of the Americas, the Caribbean Association for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The primary objective of these seminars has been to change public attitudes towards persons with disabilities. The seminars also served to promote discussion on the development of curricula designed to address the various needs of students with disabilities and to advance the concept of integrating students with disabilities into programmes for non-handicapped students. They have thus been useful in identifying special problems, reviewing and evaluating existing services and identifying action for the future. The media have also become involved and have been highlighting the achievements of disabled persons, both children and adults, and assisting in the promotion of sporting activities, such as the Special Olympics.

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

Attempts in the early part of the Decade to place disabled persons in both private and public sector employment have been difficult to sustain. However, we are pleased that there are now a number of disabled persons who earn their livelihood, particularly through self-employment. Sheltered workshops such as the blind workshop and the rehabilitation workshop at the psychiatric hospital provide both a therapeutic environment and a means of earning income. The need to ensure full access to buildings by the disabled has been acknowledged by the Government, although it has only been able to provide such access where new infrastructure is being constructed.

Another area of Government endeavour has been the provision of grants to the disabled through the National Insurance Scheme and the National Assistance programme. Assistance in kind has also been provided so as to facilitate acquisition of equipment and necessary aids. Voluntary organizations, such as the Lions Club, have assisted the Government in this area through the wheelchair loan scheme. Free travel for the handicapped on the Government's Transport Board buses has also been provided through the Decade.

In formulating policy, particularly in the health and education sectors, emphasis has been placed on early detection, treatment and prevention. Government polyclinics have played a useful role in promoting the prevention of crippling diseases, such as polio, enhancing an eye-care programme and developing accident-prevention measures at home and in the work place.

Despite these efforts, the Government of Barbados acknowledges that a great deal remains to be done at both the national and international levels if we are truly committed to advancing the disability programme from one of awareness-raising to one of action.

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

My delegation notes with appreciation the technical assistance rendered to developing countries through the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Disabled, particularly in the area of national capacity building, and supports the proposal for the continuation of the Fund. We share the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that

> "Existing resources in this area were disproportionate to the magnitude of the tasks and restrained the ability of the United Nations to carry out its assigned functions effectively and efficiently."
>
> (A/47/415, para. 25)

Disability is a reality in every part of the world. It is a global concern. It is therefore essential that Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations work together to provide the desired impetus for creating a society for all by the year 2010. In this regard, my delegation commends the Government of Canada for hosting the Conference of Ministers responsible for disabled persons on 8 and 9 October 1992, in which Barbados was honoured to participate. The Declaration by the Conference should be fully taken into account in future strategies for the disabled.

The Charter and the International Bill of Human Rights are the guarantors of human rights for all peoples. The promotion and protection of human rights of vulnerable groups, particularly the disabled, eminently deserve greater prominence on the international agenda. How society provides for its vulnerable groups must surely be our litmus test as we face the challenges of the twenty-first century. My delegation earnestly hopes that the issue of disability will continue to be given the serious consideration it merits, both at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and at the world summit for social development proposed for 1995.

(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

On this important occasion we must rededicate ourselves to these vital tasks. To this end we would do well to heed the motto adopted by Special Olympics International during the celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary: "Together We Win".

Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil): The conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons constitute an excellent opportunity for each Government, and for the international community at large, to strengthen, and to bring an even sharper focus to, the attention given to this question of fundamental importance.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

We welcome the initiative taken to mark the end of the United Nations Decade with this celebration, which includes the presence and active participation of many disabled persons. Their presence and participation in these two days of meetings bear testimony to the development of a new awareness that persons with disabilities need not be simply the target-group of well-meaning policies, but can and must be actively involved in the initiation and implementation of such policies.

In the development of this new awareness, the United Nations has played a leading role. That is an achievement that can, to a large extent, be put to the credit of the Organization. However, a great deal of work remains to be done. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report (A/47/415) and in the statements of many previous speakers in this debate, that awareness has to be turned into action.

I wish to pay a just tribute to all the non-governmental organizations and individuals that have, through constant work, helped us by bringing a forceful propelling drive to United Nations activities related to disability and by contributing to make our efforts more successful. Thanks to them, this celebration has become much more than a mere conclusion. It has become the beginning of a new period in which the dominant note must be the strengthening of the results achieved so far.

In Brazil, the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was marked by an unprecedented mobilization of this social group through its own organizations. That mobilization was translated into a number of significant changes in societal attitudes towards disability and also into changes in policies related to the situation of persons with disabilities. The most important change was the implementation of a policy that emphasizes the

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

integration of persons with disabilities into society, policies that are intended to address them not so much as patients - even if medical care may be essential in many cases - but as citizens that happen to have specific needs resulting from disability. It is estimated that about 14 million Brazilians - that is, approximately 10 per cent of our population - suffer from disabilities of various kinds. The Brazilian Government has taken upon itself the responsibility of addressing, in an appropriate manner, the specific problems faced by these fellow citizens.

During the period of the United Nations Decade, the necessary institutional framework was significantly strengthened at the levels of federal, state and local authorities in Brazil. In particular, a major step was taken with the establishment, in 1986, of a National Coordination Agency for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities.

The Brazilian Constitution, in force since 1988, includes important ground-breaking provisions to ensure protection of and assistance to persons with disabilities. Among those provisions are the implementation of programmes of assistance aimed at social integration, through job training and by facilitating access to public goods and services with the elimination of architectural obstacles; the prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities in terms of wages and recruitment criteria; the establishment of a percentage quota for persons with disabilities in the civil service; the inclusion, as one of the main goals of the social security system, of professional instruction and rehabilitation programmes for persons with disabilities and the promotion of their integration into community life; and the duty of the Government to ensure special education opportunities for disabled persons.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

In addition, a considerable number of disability-related laws have been enacted over the last 10 years. Those laws cover a wide range of Government initiatives in behalf of persons with disabilities, including regulating tax-deductible donations to disability-related organizations, giving tax exemptions for purchases of specially equipped automobiles by persons with disabilities, increasing social security benefits and pensions, and monitoring, by Government authorities, of labour conditions.

A major component of the strategy we follow is prevention. In the period from 1981 to 1991 a comprehensive programme of prevention of disability was set in motion based on the knowledge of the sad fact that around 70 per cent of cases of disability could have been prevented. The national strategy for prevention of disability includes large-scale vaccination campaigns, follow-up systems for continuous child care, training of community-based health workers, and creation of mobile health-care units able to reach remote areas in our country.

Of course, efforts at prevention of disability and improvement of the situation of persons with disabilities are seriously limited by the scarcity of resources for the necessary activities, particularly in a developing country. In spite of the mobilization of persons with disabilities, in spite of the single-minded dedication and the hard work of many inside and outside the Government, shortage of resources imposes enormous restrictions on the effectiveness of programmed activities. The report submitted by the Secretary-General adequately stresses this fact, indicating how low rates of economic growth, high unemployment, reduced levels of public expenditure and structural adjustment programmes have, in many different ways, affected programmes and services established for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

The shortcomings of international cooperation for development are most acutely felt by those who in each society are the most vulnerable - the least prepared to cope with economic hardship. Addressing this crucial problem will no doubt be one of the main factors in the effort to turn awareness into concrete action.

Many development-related initiatives of international cooperation have a direct and enormously positive impact on the situation of persons with disabilities. In the effort to ensure effective follow-up activities for the United Nations Decade, significant strengthening of such development activities is called for. The avenues of creative international cooperation are only beginning to be explored. International cooperation for development must be seen as an intrinsic, indeed indispensable, element in efforts to improve the status of persons with disabilities in developing countries.

Brazil supports the proposal to designate an international day of disabled persons, as a means of keeping disability issues high on the agenda. The degree of attention and mobilization achieved during the United Nations Decade must be preserved and intensified. That is imperative if we are to live up to the goal of achieving a better society, a society for all.

Mr. HALLIDAY (Canada): It is a wonderful honour to be a part of this historic gathering in the United Nations General Assembly. These special plenary meetings on issues facing people with disabilities put us in distinguished company. Indeed, they deal with a matter of great importance.

(Mr. Halliday, Canada)

So many among those present here have worked tirelessly to advance the cause of disabled people everywhere. I especially thank the Secretary-General for his support and leadership in once again bringing this issue to the world stage.

The States Member of the United Nations also deserve a special tribute for their pioneering work in declaring the Decade of Disabled Persons in 1982 and in initiating the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

(Mr. Halliday, Canada)

In Canada we were inspired by that World Programme of Action to develop a national strategy around the principles of equality, participation and integration.

In this regard, I should like to acknowledge the leadership and personal commitment of our Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney. He has consistently promoted respect for the abilities and dignity of individuals with disabilities. Under his leadership, the equality and empowerment of Canadians with disabilities find expression in every aspect of daily living.

Right across our country, people with disabilities, their advocacy networks, private sector leaders, unions, Governments and their officials, have worked diligently on disability issues. Action and awareness have been trademarks of their remarkable resolve with and for disabled persons. It is indeed gratifying to see what we have been able to achieve together in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration.

In recent years Canadians have been acclaimed as leaders in dealing with disability issues. We set an agenda for change and created programmes and new legislation to support that agenda. We take pride in the success of our efforts so far in bringing to life the goals of the United Nations World Programme of Action - objectives intensely focused on equality.

For Canadians equality means changing attitudes and breaking down barriers that prevent full participation in community affairs. For Canadians equality means sharing in and contributing to the social and economic life of the country. For Canadians equality also means independence: making one's own decisions about daily living. In Canada progress towards equality has been a liberating experience. Our record is based not so much on dollars and cents as on respect and understanding of the issues and their implications for

(Mr. Halliday, Canada)

society. Therein lies a challenge and opportunity for each of us: to improve the basic humanity of our societies and to create for all citizens a fair chance to reach their full productive potential.

Much of this came into focus during the 1981 United Nations Year of Disabled Persons. At that time the Government of Canada established a non-partisan Special Committee of Parliament to examine and report on disability in our country. At the outset there was little appreciation for the scope and complexity of the problems facing Canadians with disabilities. However, leaders in the province of Quebec were developing, "à part égale", a remarkable framework for systematically addressing disability issues. Their experience was exemplary, and following extensive public hearings the Special Committee of federal parliamentarians presented the Obstacles Report, a major analysis and blueprint for national action. Over 130 recommendations in "Obstacles" became practical, measurable indicators of how equality, participation and integration might be achieved in our society.

What does Canadian society grant as a matter of right to its individual citizens, and how is this actually lived out? Ours was one of the first Constitutions in the world to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms combines the right to equal protection and equal benefit under the law with a clause that prohibits discrimination based on, among other things, mental or physical disability.

(spoke in French)

As we all know, constitutional rights are significant but concrete actions are fundamental if rights are to have meaning in the life of a country. That is why in 1983 the Canadian Government designated the Secretary

(Mr. Halliday, Canada)

of State as Minister Responsible for the Status of Disabled Persons. In moving disability from a health to a citizenship perspective, the Secretary of State has worked with every level of government and a cohort of cabinet colleagues to coordinate major initiatives on disability issues, in nearly every area of government influence.

(spoke in English)

It is well understood that economic independence is a key to the achievement of real empowerment and active participation in day-to-day life by citizens with disabilities. In a society where production and consumption are central activities, one either is a participant in the market-place or is marginalized. Everyone would agree that an adequate standard of living is essential to having an acceptable quality of life. That is why our legislative record includes the Employment Equity Act, which makes employment of Canadians with disabilities in the labour force a priority. In Canada labour codes have been amended, housing and transportation improved, and the taxation system changed in recognition of the additional expenses borne by disabled persons in the workplace. These measures help to provide a level playing field for disabled workers and their employers, and allow more disabled persons to live self-sufficient, independent lives.

Earlier this year the Parliament of Canada passed an omnibus bill designed to ensure the full participation of citizens with disabilities in the affairs of the nation. This landmark legislative package guarantees, among other things, full access to the electoral system and access in alternate format to government records and information. With essential regulatory and enforcement policies, "omnibus" includes amendments to our Citizenship Act, Privacy Act, Canada Evidence Act and our Criminal Code.

(Mr. Halliday, Canada)

While all of these advances are necessary, the best way to promote participation is to do it. Persons with disabilities have provided tremendous leadership in showing us how boundless their participation can be. Rick Hansen is one such celebrated Canadian. Rick's "Man in Motion World Tour" made all of us realize that often the greatest limitations faced by disabled persons were those imposed upon them by others.

Building on the momentum of Rick's tour, our federal Government declared an annual National Access Awareness Week - an opportunity each year for communities to look in their own backyards to plan together the changes they will make in five key areas of public concern. These are: transportation, housing, education, recreation and employment. This past year National Access Awareness Week was observed all across our country with over 1,000 communities of friends and neighbours directly involved.

Canadians believe that with improved access comes greater participation, which in turn changes attitudes and paves the way for full integration into every aspect of daily living.

With the United Nations Decade in its final phase, we knew it was time to take stock. Although much had been done, our Government agreed there was still a great deal more to do to remove those obstacles which deny the rights that come with citizenship. As a consequence, last year our Prime Minister and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Disabled Persons launched a five-year National Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities. This National Strategy takes major steps towards ensuring equal access to housing, employment, transportation, education and communications - in short, the foundations of daily life in our society.

(Mr. Halliday, Canada)

In Canada we recognize the creative spirit and expertise of a strong consumer movement. We know the value of working in partnership and confidence with people with disabilities. That is why we continue to support Disabled Peoples International, which has its headquarters in Winnipeg, in the province of Manitoba. That is also why we also hosted Independence 1992, an International Congress on Disability, and the Third World Congress of Disabled Peoples International.

In Vancouver, British Columbia, at Independence 1992, over 3,000 delegates from over 120 countries shared insights and ideas on the Congress theme: "Self-determination by Persons with Disabilities". They created renewed momentum for international action and provided graphic evidence of the impact of the disabled persons movement.

To bring the Assembly up to date, a framework for global action was discussed just last week in Montreal by 75 Ministers and senior representatives from around the world. The Canadian Secretary of State, the Honourable Robert de Cotret, hosted the International Conference of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

At that gathering the drive to channel the Decade of Disabled Persons into the next century was clearly evident. Together, the Montreal meeting and these two days at the United Nations bring us one step closer to creating new partnerships and strengthening our resolve to act in solidarity.

(Mr. Halliday, Canada)

As we are all aware, disability cuts across all countries and communities; it affects all cultures, all age groups, all economic levels and all backgrounds. We have much to learn from one another.

While we in Canada are proud of our achievements during the Decade of Disabled Persons, we recognize that there is more to be done, both at home and abroad. The number of persons with disabilities is increasing throughout the world - in part, because of declining preventive health programmes and inadequate education programmes. Many disabled individuals are still frozen out of the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Full participation and integration into society and full productivity are goals yet to be achieved.

While each of us must build on achievements within our own borders, we must also improve our capacity to share resources, technologies and experiences through such collaborative forums as Disabled Peoples International and the United Nations. We respectfully suggest that the time has come for countries, both individually and collectively through the United Nations, to give higher priority to issues of concern to disabled persons, using existing or new funding.

(spoke in French)

Whatever the nation, the particular circumstances or the aspirations, and no matter how complex the task, we must work together to make the world family one of equality, dignity and interdependence. In the final analysis, that is the challenge that faces all of us at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

(spoke in English)

If we are to achieve our goal and implement the principles that we have enunciated we must be ever-mindful of the words of the renowned Austrian psychiatrist Dr. Alfred Adler, when he said:

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"It is easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them."

Mr. KHALIL-UR-REHMAN (Pakistan): Allow me first to convey, through you, Mr. President, our deep sorrow and heartfelt sympathy to the brotherly people and Government of Egypt following the death and destruction caused by the terrible earthquake that struck that country yesterday.

Worldwide, more than half a billion people are disabled. Approximately 160 million of them are women, and 140 million are children. Here we are talking of almost 10 per cent. of the entire world population. This is a situation that should be a source of deep concern to us all. We cannot let this vast segment of the world population endure a lifetime of isolation and oppression. We speak of them in terms of statistics, percentages and figures, but it is tragic that these figures cannot convey the pain, enormity and meaning of this human suffering. This is a situation that can truly be called a silent emergency. While we rejoice at the end of the cold war and work with high expectations to forge a world order to usher in a new era free from want and deprivation, our efforts will be meaningless if we do not address these silent emergencies urgently as an issue of the utmost concern.

The declaration, in 1981, of the International Year of Disabled Persons was a major landmark in an effort to build a global consensus in response to disability. The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted in 1982 as the main outcome of the International Year, reflected the emerging change in social attitudes towards disability and was an expression of a new approach based on equal rights for people with physical or mental disability. It held out the promise of a future in which persons with disabilities would enjoy equal opportunities for fuller participation in society.

(Mr. Khalil-Ur-Rehman, Pakistan)

In 1982, along with the adoption of the World Programme of Action, the United Nations proclaimed the period 1983-1992 as the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. The Decade provided an initial time-frame during which Governments and organizations could implement the recommended activities of the World Programme of Action. The guiding philosophy for the Decade was a shift from a charity approach towards an integrated social development approach reflecting recognition of the fact that the problems of disabled persons cannot be solved in isolation from those of society as a whole.

The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons is coming to an end. We have come a long way in the past 10 years. A lot has been achieved, but much remains to be done. These special plenary meetings give us an excellent opportunity to review and reflect upon the outcome of the past 10 years and to chart a plan of action for the future.

Among the achievements of the Decade, first and foremost is the increased awareness of disability issues among policy-makers, planners, politicians, parents and disabled persons themselves. Research, population censuses and household surveys have increased. Significant progress has been made in the prevention of disability and in the rehabilitation of disabled persons.

First, technology is now available to prevent most impairments from developing into disabilities. Disability can no longer be relegated to the back burner of the international political agenda. Secondly, organizations of and for the disabled have increased in number and influence, and they command increased respect. Thirdly, the great need for the elaboration of norms and standards for national and international conduct with regard to disability has been recognized. Fourthly, at the international level the United Nations

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has established an inter-agency mechanism and a non-governmental organization consultative mechanism to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations agencies and with the non-governmental organizations.

It is unfortunate that, in spite of the achievements I have mentioned, the Decade has failed to improve the condition of the disabled in most of the developing countries. On the contrary, the current economic and social deterioration, marked by low growth rates, high unemployment, reduced public expenditure, structural adjustment programmes, disease, malnutrition, war and violence, has negatively affected programmes and services for the disabled in the developing countries.

The statistics are staggering - absolutely mind-boggling. Of the 500 million men, women and children affected by physical or mental disability, 85 per cent are from developing countries, and more than 90 per cent of the world's visually disabled are from developing countries. Of these, only 1 per cent have access to basic health, education and sanitation services. The tragedy and irony is that 80 per cent of the disabilities occurring in the developing countries could have been avoided through basic and inexpensive immunization, health care and nutrition. If these negative socio-economic trends are allowed to persist, disabled people risk being increasingly relegated to the margins of society, depending totally on ad hoc support.

We should accept the challenge of the 1990s to transform the awareness created during the Decade into action towards achieving a society for all. Awareness alone cannot ensure full equality of opportunity for disabled people.

(Mr. Khalil-Ur-Rehman, Pakistan)

While developing long-term action-oriented strategies for the future, our work can be guided by the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the long-term strategy to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action to the year 2000 and beyond and the standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons.

One of the major emphases of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was the inclusion of the World Programme of Action in national policies and programmes. In this regard, the Government of Pakistan has taken a number of steps towards incorporating the World Programme of Action in its national policies. The programmes being undertaken during this Decade cover the following main aspects: streamlining, up-dating and developing existing educational and training facilities; consolidating and expanding skill development facilities; establishing counselling and guidance services; exploring and developing rehabilitation services, preferably through community motivation; expanding the programme of immunization; and establishing diagnostic, assessment, treatment, prognostic, training and rehabilitation services.

As a first step, a national policy for disabled persons was formulated and a national focal point was set up in the Ministry of Health, Special Education and Social Affairs, by establishing a special division for the care, education, vocational training and employment of disabled persons. The National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons was constituted under the Ordinance for Employment and Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons. People with disabilities are adequately represented on this Council.

Six Special Education Centres of Excellence are being set up at the federal level, and 40 centres with similar facilities are to be set up at the

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provincial, divisional, district and major city levels. About 32 centres have been commissioned, and special education services are being provided. For the training of personnel engaged in special education services, a National Institute of Special Education has been established. In addition, teachers and personnel are being sent abroad for appropriate training to address the needs of the disabled at the national level. Special Education Centres are being established at the post-graduate level in the universities so as to address the need for trained manpower. Rehabilitation constitutes a cornerstone of any policy for the integration of the disabled in the mainstream of society. In this regard, the Government of Pakistan has established projects to provide vocational training to disabled adults, and a 1-per-cent quota has been set to provide employment to disabled persons in all Government and semi-Government organizations.

Since the beginning of the Decade, the Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with the United Nations, has taken important measures for prevention and early detection of disabilities. A comprehensive nationwide immunization programme, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), is under way. At the same time, diagnostic and assessment centres have been set up in hospitals, and Special Education Centres established all over the country for early detection and prevention of disabilities.

Pakistan has made significant progress in increasing the level of awareness of disability issues. National radio and television have been acting as community outreach media to create awareness among the people about the disabling diseases and their prevention and to remove the prejudices and taboos associated with disability. Disabled persons are represented on the

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Advisory Board for Television and Radio Programmes. Non-governmental organizations have also done a commendable job to supplement the work of the Government.

The Government of Pakistan is fully committed to the rehabilitation of disabled persons and the equalization of opportunities for them, and is taking all possible steps to prevent disabilities through such preventive measures as immunization and early detection programmes. In this regard, we support the aims and objectives of the Programme of Action, which provides a solid policy framework for future action. We also support the continuation of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons beyond the Decade, and call upon those States that can do so to contribute generously to the Fund. It would also be useful to proclaim a United Nations day of disabled persons so that their special needs are adequately recognized in the years to come.

My delegation is in general agreement with the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/47/415, particularly the adoption of national affirmative action plans for the period 1993 to 2002, encompassing the three components of the Programme of Action, that is, prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities. However, in the implementation of any plan of action, it will be important to ensure provision of adequate financial and technical resources at the national and multinational levels. Technical cooperation and assistance programmes of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as bilateral assistance, will therefore have to be enhanced.

For its part, the Government of Pakistan remains committed to the amelioration of the sufferings of the disabled in Pakistan. This is

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essentially being done by making disabled persons part of the policy-making team and organizations so that they are able to contribute to the nation-building programme as mainstream citizens of the country.

We all have to strive to remove disabled persons from the shadowy walks of life and let them live in the sunshine of fuller participation in and identity with normal day-to-day life.

Mr. BURKOV (Russian Federation) (interpretation from Russian): It gives me great pleasure to speak from this rostrum, to participate in this exchange of experience, information and ideas at the special plenary meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

First, I should like to say something about the important role and contribution of the United Nations in raising the awareness of Member States regarding the problems of disability and in achieving the objectives of equality of disabled persons and their full participation in the life of society. In our view, the particularly high praise should go to the basic documents drafted and adopted by the United Nations during the period just concluded, such as the World Programme of Action, the handbook on ensuring equal opportunities for disabled persons and the guidelines for establishing and strengthening national coordinating committees. We hope that at its forty-eighth session the General Assembly will also adopt the standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons.

Regrettably, in the past our policy for the disabled was based on the principle of material assistance as the main way of meeting their needs, while the United Nations recommendations aimed at ensuring for the disabled equal opportunities in the enjoyment of their rights were virtually ignored.

(Mr. Burkov, Russian Federation)

In the new Russia our policy concerning the disabled has radically changed. Bills for Russian laws on State guarantees for the rights of the disabled and for the foundations of a rehabilitation system have been prepared. State policy regarding the disabled has been set in such priority areas as the development of a legislative basis, informational and technical support services for the disabled, the creation of a barrier-free environment and an industrial base for integrating the disabled into society, and the construction of a State system for the medical, vocational and social rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

In implementation of that State policy, in 1992 the President of Russia adopted a number of decrees laying down specific measures, including a decree on supplementary measures for State support to the disabled and for ensuring their employment.

(Mr. Burkov, Russian Federation)

This is an indication of the attention being focused on the problems of disability despite the difficult financial and economic situation in our country. The President of Russia is giving these matters his personal attention, as can be seen from a number of recent events. The Coordinating Committee for the Disabled, an advisory body that reports directly to the President, has been established. Thanks to the support of the Head of State, the first international festival for disabled youth was held at Moscow. Boris Yeltsin has awarded the first medal of new Russia, the Medal for Personal Courage, to three disabled persons who traversed in wheelchairs the distance of more than 10,000 kilometres from the Pacific Ocean to Moscow. I should point out that that super-marathon was held under the auspices of the United Nations to mark the conclusion of the Decade of Disabled Persons. Tens of thousands of citizens of free Russia all along the way cheered the courage and greatness of spirit of those young men, who are with us today here in this Hall as part of the Russian delegation. Their names are Yuri Shapovalov, Evgenii Klychkov and Aleksandr Sukhov. Let us hail them!

We shall continue to support such events in the future also. That is the purpose of the establishment of the National Fund to Assist the Disabled of Russia.

Our country's leadership attaches great importance to ensuring the direct participation of organizations for the disabled in decision-making at the State level. In accordance with the decision establishing the Coordinating Committee for the Disabled, reporting to the President of Russia, a Council for Assistance to the Disabled is being set up. The recommendations of the Council, whose membership will include the leaders of organizations for the disabled, will be brought to the attention of the President.

(Mr. Burkov, Russian Federation)

The first results of those institutions' activities show that it is precisely such bodies that constitute one of the most effective kinds of machinery for coordinating and consolidating the efforts of State and non-governmental organs.

The need to coordinate international efforts would seem to be just as obvious, and that is the purpose of our President's initiative for the proclamation of 3 December as the International Day for the Disabled. We are grateful to the international community for supporting that proposal.

In this connection we find interesting the idea of creating a special United Nations prize that would be awarded on the International Day for the Disabled to individuals or organizations in the social and political fields that have made outstanding contributions to the achievement of the objectives of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The Russian delegation would support the establishment of such a prize. In our opinion, this idea could be discussed by the Third Committee at the current session of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, on instructions from the President of Russia, Mr. Boris Yeltsin, I should like to thank the United Nations for its many years of efforts to improve the status of the disabled throughout the world and to create equal opportunities for them.

I assure everyone here that Russia will consistently support such efforts in the future.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.